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From: Co-editors Alberto Alemanno and Bas Heerma van Voss

Cc: Cliff Wirajendi, EJRR executive manager; Rebecca O'Rourke, executive publisher for social sciences journals, Cambridge University Press

Re: Call for contributions to **EJRR Special Issue on Long-term Risks and Future Generations**

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Dear colleagues,

There is a strong presentism bias in current modes of governance. A high-velocity, short-term culture dominates our political, financial, social and cultural systems, to the point of systematically lacking concern for future generations and the risks they face. Risks range from environmental collapse, e.g. through decreasing biodiversity, to risks from new technologies, e.g. artificial intelligence. Evidence of political carelessness for the long-term abounds: from a lack of pandemic preparation, stalling climate policy, disregard for long-term risks such as bioweapons to a highly dysfunctional, unresponsive political system.

The causes for this presentism bias are many and varied. They can be found in cognitive biases and heuristics, such as availability bias, at the personal level (Yudkowsky, 2008; Tetlock and Gardner, 2015; Morewedge et al, 2015); institutional frames, such as the 4–5-year parliamentary cycle (Healy & Malhotra, 2009; Jacobs 2011) combined with an unbalanced policy process where special interests are typically overrepresented (Hillman, Keim & Schuler, 2004; Stratmann, 2005; Rahman, 2017); as well as in insufficient, non-resilient mechanisms for cooperation at the global level (Boyd & Wilson, 2020).

As a result, future generations are generally neglected in governance and cannot participate in negotiating to secure their interests in the social contract. While some strands of moral philosophers argue that future generations should be given a similar weight we do to the well-being of those alive today (Ord, 2021; Mackaskill, 2022), mainstream economists tend to give less weight to future generations than to current ones when weighting up the costs and benefits of a course of action (e.g. Farber, 2022).

Contrary to its original long-term ambition, the European Union – and its 27 Member States – is no exception to the trend of neglecting the long-term. After more than seventy years of unprecedented socio-economic integration, the EU fails to give European unborn generations a seat at the table. In today's EU decision-making, future generations have no rights or

representation. Existing long-term EU strategy does not extend beyond 2050, thus discriminating based on dates of birth. In these circumstances, policymakers nor political leaders are incentivised to think and act long term.

However, a growing concern about long-term risks (most prominently climate change and pandemic risk) is leading to growing public awareness of the importance of long-term thinking as a civilizational priority. The emergence of a panoply of academic as well as institutional and privately-led initiatives suggest that the idea of embedding future generations within existing policy ecosystems may be gaining traction. While this new trend may be providing a unique opportunity to counter short-termism, they remain on the margins thus failing to translate into an autonomous, self-aware movement, or academic discipline.

This *EJRR Special Issue* intends to help fill this gap, by bringing together social scientists interested in how to integrate the interests of future generations into policymaking processes. It intends to focus on long-term risks with a potentially destabilizing impact, as they provide a clear-cut case of how the interest of future generations are currently being neglected. Its ultimate aim is to lay the foundations for a research agenda on long term governance in the European Union.

We are interested in contributions focusing **on long-term risks** (defined as to include both low-probability, high impact events - such as volcanic eruptions with a global impact - as well as high-probability risks that are unlikely to materialize in the near-term - such as climate change -), from both disciplinary (law, political science, public policy, geography, moral philosophy, sociology) and interdisciplinary approaches (EU studies, risk governance and regulation, climate change studies, critical geopolitics). Contributions can take a contemporary or longer historical perspective, and range in focus from the (European) national scale, through the EU-level to the role of the EU on the global scale, by taking either a horizontal or sectoral perspective, or combining both. Topics of interest include – but are not limited to – the following themes:

- Embedding future generations' interests into politics (e.g. lower voting age to counterbalance the ageism of democracies) and policy-making via:
  - reformed regulatory impact assessment and discounting
  - behaviourally informed policymaking and interventions
  - the design of democratic innovations such as deliberative and participatory processes
  - reformed inheritance law and other inter-generational redistribution policies
- Identifying and analyzing long-term risks as well as existential risks via:
  - Reformed risk analysis' frameworks
  - Cognitive biases and long-term risk perception
  - New international, EU and domestic risk governance
  - Technological assessment
- Governance of individual long-term risks, be they catastrophic (likely to cause severe harm to humans on a global scale), existential (with a chance of rendering humanity extinct) or both:
  - artificial intelligence
  - synthetic biology

- geoengineering
- super volcanic eruptions
- nuclear war
- near-Earth objects.
- Policies with the aim of improving societal resistance to long-term risks
- Long-term financial resilience
- The role of the (re-)insurance industry in societal risk mitigation
- Geopolitics and international cooperation of long-term risks, e.g. through game theoretical approaches

The format of the contributions sought is:

- original research paper
- of a length ranging between **4000 to 6000 words** (incl. footnotes).

Interested contributors are invited to submit their short abstract (maximum 200 words) by **October 15<sup>st</sup>** (at the latest) by completing this [form](#). Following a preselection, authors will be asked to submit their full manuscripts – according to the EJRR’s [author instructions](#) – by **January 6<sup>th</sup>**, which will be subject to a swift yet thorough peer-review. Accepted manuscripts will be published online first (on [CUP FirstView](#)), prior to the release of the entire special issue during **the first quarter 2023**. A hybrid event, in Paris or Brussels, may be organised to present and discussed the submitted papers.

### *Selected bibliography*

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